



February is National Time Management Month

MAKING TIME MANAGEMENT WORK FOR YOU

Malcolm Forbes was quoted as saying “Unless you’re serving time, there’s never enough of it.” In order to develop strong time management skills we must make an important shift in focus: Concentrate on results, not on being busy.

Time management skills are an essential element for those who strive to be effective and efficient. In fact, people who routinely apply time management techniques are among the highest achievers in all facets of life.

The 80:20 Rule

Many people spend their days in a flurry of activity, achieving very little because they’re not concentrating their effort on the things that matter the most. The Pareto Principle or the ‘80:20 Rule’ says that typically 80% of unfocused effort generates only 20% of results. *The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort.*

Make Every Minute Count

The most common time-wasters are procrastination and lack of scheduling. If you’ve found yourself putting off important tasks, you’re not alone. But chronic procrastination can severely affect one’s ability to live a productive life or maintain a successful career.

The key to controlling this destructive habit is to understand why it happens. Most people delay performing tasks that are challenging, frustrating, or boring in favor of doing something that is more enjoyable or more comfortable. Particularly when we feel overwhelmed, we tackle the tasks that are easy and that ensure success.

In addition to wasting valuable time on insignificant tasks, procrastinators often fail to understand the difference between urgent tasks and important tasks; and allow themselves to be driven by the person whose demands are loudest.

Other causes of procrastination include:

- Waiting for the “right” mood or a “better” time to tackle the important task at hand
- A fear of failure or success
- Poor decision-making and organizational skills
- Perfectionism (“I don’t have the right skills or resources to do this perfectly now, so I won’t do it at all.”)

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Schedule for Success

Once you've identified your time traps you can begin to develop strategies to better manage your activities. Determine what you need for peak efficiency and identify your roadblocks so that you can plan for a successful outcome. Consider the following ideas:

At Work:

- Determine your peak work time and use it productively by doing your hardest tasks during your most energetic hours
- Make a high priority list of things that must be done today
- Make a low priority list with things that can wait
- Customize your work area and plan out what you'll need in order to accomplish the task
- Limit distractions
- Allow yourself the appropriate amount of time to accomplish the work on your lists
- Establish breaks to meet your personal needs and for rest
- Set goals and implement a reward system to motivate yourself
- Establish and maintain open communication with co-workers to ensure that some tasks can be accomplished cooperatively
- Recognize and appreciate work that has been accomplished or is close to completion instead of criticizing unfinished work

At Home:

- Make lists. They provide structure and give you a sense of accomplishment
- Make a realistic schedule for each day of the week and stick with it - eventually it will become a habit, which will help to save time when your brain is tired and you have difficulty managing the tasks for which you are responsible
- There is comfort in consistency. Coordinate schedules and develop routines for your entire household. It will ensure that daily tasks, such as homework; dinner; bedtime; morning; etc., go more smoothly for everyone
- Look for ways to involve others in your tasks, either to make the task more enjoyable - such as taking older children along on a shopping trip and using the time to visit with them, or to illicit their help so things are accomplished more quickly - such as delegating specific chores to children
- Take time to save time. For instance, when possible, cook larger amounts and freeze meal-sized portions to serve at another time

For more information or assistance in managing your time, contact Symmetry at (414) 256-4800/(800) 236-7905.



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